

“I beg your pardon, sir. I’m looking for Dr. Bird.”

The famous Bureau of Standards scientist appraised the speaker rapidly. Keen blue eyes stared questioningly at him from a mahogany brown face, criss-crossed with a thousand tiny wrinkles. The tattooed anchor on his hand and the ill-fitting blue serge suit smacked of the sea while the squareness of his shoulders and the direct gaze of his eye spoke eloquently of authority.

“I’m Dr. Bird, Captain. What can I do for you?”

“Thank you, Doctor, but I’m not a captain. My name is Mitchell and I am, or was, the first mate of the *Arethusa*.”

“The *Arethusa*!” Operative Carnes of the United States Secret Service sprang to his feet. “You said the *Arethusa*? There *were* no survivors!”

“I believe that I am the only one.”

“Where have you been hiding and why haven’t you reported the fact of your rescue to the proper authorities? Tell the truth; I’m a federal officer!”

Carnes flashed the gold badge of the Secret Service and an expression of anger crossed Mitchell’s face.

“If I had wished to talk to an officer I could have found plenty in New York,” he said shortly. “I came to Washington in order to tell my story to Dr. Bird.”

The seaman and the detective glared at one another for a moment and then Dr. Bird intervened.

“Pipe down, Carnes,” he said softly. “Mr. Mitchell undoubtedly has reasons, excellent reasons, for his actions. Sit down, Mr. Mitchell, and have a cigar.”

Mitchell accepted the cigar which the doctor proffered and took a chair. He lighted the weed and after another glance of hostility toward the detective he pointedly ignored him and addressed his remarks to Dr. Bird.

“I have no objection to telling you why I haven’t spoken earlier, Doctor,” he said. “When the *Arethusa* sank, I must have hit my head on something, for the next thing I knew, I was in the Marine Hospital in New York. I had been picked up unconscious by a fishing boat and brought in, and I lay there a week before I knew anything. When I knew what I was doing I heard about the loss of my ship and was told that there were no survivors, and I didn’t know what to do. The story I had to tell was so weird and improbable that I hesitated to speak to anyone about it. I was not sure at first that it was not a trick of a disordered brain, but since my head has cleared I am convinced of the truth of it ... and yet I know that it *can’t* be so. I have read about you and some of the things you have done, and so as soon as I was able to travel I came here to tell you about it. You will be better able to judge than I, whether what I tell you really happened or was only a vision.”

Dr. Bird leaned back in his chair and put the tips of his fingers together. Long, tapering fingers they were, sensitive and well shaped, though sadly marred by

acid stains. It was in his hands alone that Dr. Bird showed the genius in his make-up, the artistry which inspired him to produce those miracles of experimentation which had made his name a household word in the realm of science. Aside from those hands he more resembled a pugilist than a scientist. A heavy shock of unruly black hair surmounted a face with beetling black brows and a prognathous jaw. His enormous head, with a breadth and height of forehead which were amazing, rose from a pillar-like neck which sprang from a pair of massive shoulders and the arching chest of the trained athlete. Dr. Bird stood six feet two inches in his socks, and weighed over two hundred stripped. As he leaned back a curious glitter, which Carnes had learned to associate with keen interest, showed for an instant in his eyes.

“I will be glad to hear your story, Mr. Mitchell,” he said softly. “Tell it in your own way and try not to omit any detail, no matter how trivial it may be.”

The seaman nodded and sat silent for a moment as though marshaling his thoughts.

“The story really starts the afternoon of May 12th,” he said, “although I didn’t realize the importance of the first incident at the time. We were steaming along at good speed, hoping to make New York before too late for quarantine, when a hail came from the forward lookout. I was on watch and I went forward to see what was the matter. The lookout was Louis Green, an able bodied seaman and a good one, but a confirmed drunkard. I asked him what the trouble was and he turned toward me a face that was haggard with terror.

“‘I’ve seen a sea serpent, Mr. Mitchell,’ he said.

“‘Nonsense!’ I replied sharply. ‘You’ve been drinking again.’

“He swore that he hadn’t and I asked him to describe what he had seen. His teeth were chattering so that he could hardly speak, but he gasped out a story about seeing a monstrous head, a half mile across, he said, with a long snake body stretching out over the sea until the end of it was lost on the horizon. I turned my glass in the direction he pointed and of course

there was nothing to be seen. The man's condition was such as to make him worse than useless as a lookout, so I relieved him and ordered him below. I took it for a touch of delirium tremens.

“We were bucking a head wind, although not a very stiff one, and we didn't make port until after dark, so we anchored at quarantine, just off Staten Island, in forty fathoms of water, and Captain Murphy radioed for a Coast Guard boat to come out and lay by us for the night. As you have probably heard, we were carrying four millions in bar gold consigned to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York from the Bank of England.”

Dr. Bird and Carnes nodded. The inexplicable loss of the *Arethusa* had occupied much space in the papers ten days earlier.

“The cutter came out, signalled, and dropped anchor about three hundred yards away. So far, everything was exactly as it should be. I walked to the stern of the boat and looked out across the Atlantic and then I realized that Green wasn't the only one who could see

things. The wind had fallen and it was getting pretty dark, but not too dark to see things a pretty good distance away. As I looked I saw, or thought I saw, a huge black leathery mass come to the surface a mile or so away. There were two things on it that looked like eyes, and I had a feeling as though some malignant thing was staring at me. I rubbed my eyes and looked again, but the vision persisted, and I went forward to get a glass. When I came back the thing, whatever it was, had disappeared, but the water where it had been was boiling as though there were a great spring or something of the sort under the surface.

“I trained my glass on the disturbed area, and I will take my oath that I saw a huge body like a snake emerge from the water. It lay in long undulations on the waves, and moved with them as though it were floating. It was quite a bit nearer than the first thing had been and I could see it plainly with the glass. I would judge it to be fifteen or twenty feet thick, and it actually seemed to disappear in the distance as Green had described it. The sight of the thing sent shivers

up and down my spine, and I gave a hoarse shout. The lookout hurried to my side and asked me what the trouble was. I pointed and handed him the glass. He looked through it and handed it back to me with a curious expression.

“‘I can’t see nothing, sir,’ he said.

“I took the glass from him and tried to level it but my hands were trembling so that I was forced to rest it on the rail. The lookout was right. There was absolutely nothing to be seen and the peculiar appearance of the sea had subsided to normal. The lookout was staring at me rather curiously and I knew that he was thinking the same thing about me as I had thought about Green in the afternoon. I made some kind of an excuse and went below to pull myself together. I caught a glimpse of myself in the glass. I was as white as a sheet, and the sweat was running off my face in drops.

“I shook myself together after a fashion and managed to persuade myself that the whole thing was just a trick of my mind, inspired by Green’s vivid description



of his delirious vision of the afternoon. Eight bells struck, and when Mr. Fulton, the junior officer, relieved me, I laid down and tried to quiet myself. I didn't have much luck. Just before I took the deck again at midnight I slipped down to the forecastle to see how Green was coming along. He was lying in his bunk, wide awake, with staring eyes.

"How are you feeling now, Green?' I asked.

"He looked up at me with an expression of a man who has looked death in the face.

"Ain't there no chance of dockin' to-night, Mr. Mitchell?' he asked.

"Of course not,' I said rather sharply. 'What's the matter with you? Are you afraid your sea serpent will get us?'

"He'll get us if we stay out here to-night, sir,' he replied with an air of conviction. 'I saw the horrible mouth on him, large enough to bite this ship in half; and it had a beak like a bird, like a bloody parrot, sir.

I saw its horrible body, too, with great black ulcers on the under side of it where the sharks had been after it. For all the shark takes a man now and then, he's the seaman's friend, sir, because he kills off the sea serpents who would take ship and all.'

"'Nonsense, Green!' I said sharply. 'Don't talk any more such foolishness or I'll have you ironed. You've been drinking so much that you are seeing things, and I won't have the crew disturbed by your crazy talk.'

"'You won't think it's talk when those big eyes stare into yours to-night, Mr. Mitchell, and that body twists around you and squeezes the life out of you. I don't care whether you iron me or not; I know that I'm doomed and so is everyone else; but I won't talk about it, sir. The crew might as well rest easy while they can, for there's no escape if we have to stay out here to-night.'

"'Well, be sure you keep a tight mouth then,' I said, and left rather hurriedly. I was in a cold sweat, for his air of conviction, together with what I had seen, had

shaken me pretty badly. I heard the watch changing up above, and knew there would be men in the forecastle in a minute. I didn't want to face them right then.

"Mr. Fulton reported everything quiet when I went on deck to relieve him, and although I surveyed the water through a night glass for as far as I could see, there was nothing out of the way. The Coast Guard's lights were shining less than a quarter of a mile away, and things looked peaceful enough. The wind had gone down with the sun; the sea was almost glassy, and there was a bright moon.

"After going around the ship, I relieved all of the watch except two men for lookouts, and sent them below to get a good night's sleep. If I hadn't done that, some of them might be alive now.

"I paced the deck for an hour trying to quiet my nerves, but really getting more nervous every minute. Three bells struck and I walked forward and leaned on the rail to watch the water. I saw a peculiar swirl

as though some large body were coming to the surface from below, and then I saw—it.

“Dr. Bird, I take a drink once in a while when I am on shore, but never at sea and never in excess, and I know it wasn’t a vision of drink delirium. I felt perfectly normal aside from my nervousness, and I don’t think it was fever. Either I saw it or I am insane, for it is as vivid to me as though I were standing on the *Arethusa*’s deck and that monstrous horror was rising once more before my eyes.”

The seaman’s face had become drawn and white as he talked, and drops of sweat were trickling from his chin. Carnes sat forward absorbed in his narrative while Dr. Bird sat back with a glitter in his black eyes and an expression of great attention on his face.

“Go on, Mr. Mitchell,” the doctor said soothingly. “Tell me just what you saw.”

Mitchell shuddered and glanced quickly around the laboratory as though to assure himself that he was safe within four walls.

“From the surface of the sea,” he went on, “rose a massive body, black, and of the appearance of wet leather. It must have been a couple of hundred yards across, although the size of objects is often magnified by moonlight and my terror may have added to its size. In the midst of it were two great discs, thirty feet across, which glowed red with the reflected moonlight. It stared for a moment and then rose higher until it towered above the ship; and then I saw, or thought I saw, a huge gaping beak like a parrot’s. It was as Green had described it, large enough to bite the *Arethusa* in half, and she was a ship of three thousand tons.

“I was frozen with horror and couldn’t move or cry out. As I watched, I saw the long snake-like body emerge from the water, and the estimate I had made of the size in the afternoon seemed pitifully inadequate. Presently a second and a third snake arose from the water, and then more, until the whole sea and the air above it seemed a writhing mass of huge snakes. I remember wondering why the watch of the Coast Guard cutter didn’t sound an alarm, and

then I realized that the thing had arisen on our port side and the cutter was on the starboard.

“The mass of snakes writhed backward and forward, and then two of them rose in the air and hung over the ship. I could see the under side and I saw what Green had called the scars where the sharks had attacked. They were great cup-shaped depressions with vile white edges, and they did resemble huge sores or ulcers. They wavered over the ship for an instant, and then both of them dropped down on the deck.

“I found my voice and I think that I gave a yell, but even as I opened my mouth, I realized the futility of it. The *Arethusa* was sucked down into the sea as though it had been a tiny chip. I saw the water rising to the rail, and I think I cried out again. The ship tilted and I felt myself falling. The next thing I knew was when I was in the hospital and was told that I had been raving for a week. I was afraid to tell my story for fear I would be put in an asylum, so I kept a tight tongue in my head until I was discharged.”

Dr. Bird mused for a moment as the seaman's voice stopped.

"You cried out all right, Mr. Mitchell," he said. "You gave two distinct shouts, both of which were heard by the watch on the *Wren*, the Coast Guard cutter. They reported that at 1:30, the *Arethusa* sank without warning. As soon as he heard your shouts, the watch gave the alarm and the crew piled on deck. The *Arethusa* was gone completely and the *Wren* was tossing about like 'a chip in a whirlpool' as they graphically described it. The *Wren* had steam up and they fought the waves and steamed over your anchoring ground looking for survivors, but they found none. The sea gradually subsided and they did the only thing they could do—dropped a buoy, to guide the salvage people, and radioed for assistance. The *Robin* came out and joined them, and both cutters stood by until daylight, but nothing unusual was seen. The insurance people are trying to salvage the wreck now, but so far they have made little headway."

“That brings me to the rest of the story, the part that made me decide to come to you, Doctor,” said the seaman. “Did you see what happened to the divers yesterday?”

Dr. Bird nodded.

“I saw a brief account of it,” he said. “It seems that two of them were lost through their lines getting fouled and their air connections severed in some way. I don’t believe the bodies have been recovered yet.”

“They never will be recovered, Doctor. I was discharged from the hospital yesterday and the papers were just out with an account of it. I went down to the dock where the *John MacLean*, the salvage ship, ties up, and I talked to Captain Starley who commands it. I have known him casually for some years, although not intimately, and he gave me a few more details than the press got. He didn’t connect me up at first with the Mitchell who was reported lost on the *Arethusa*.



“The first man to go down from the *MacLean* was Charley Melrose, an expert diver. He went down in a pressure outfit to the bottom and started to work. Everything was going along fine until the telephone suddenly rang and the man who answered it heard him say, ‘Raise me, for God’s sake! Hurry!’ The signal for raising was given, but they hadn’t got him more than thirty feet from the bottom before there came a tug on the line and he was gone! The air line, the lifting cable and the telephone cord floated free and were reeled in. Melrose had been plucked off the end of that line as you or I would pluck off a grape.”

Dr. Bird leaned forward with the curious glitter again in his eye.

“Go on,” he said tersely.

“Blake, the other diver, donned a suit and insisted on being lowered at once. Starley tried to dissuade him but he insisted on going down. They lowered him over the side with a twelve-foot steel-shod pike in his hand. He never got to the bottom. He had not been lowered more than a hundred feet when a scream came over

the telephone, and again there was a jerk on the lines which threatened to wreck the reel—and the line came aboard with no diver on the end of it. At the same time, Starley told me, the sea boiled and churned as though the whole bottom were coming up, and his ship was tossed about as though it were in a violent storm, although it was calm enough for forty fathom salvage work and that is pretty quiet, you know. Half the time his screws were out of water and he had a hard time to keep from being capsized. He fought his way out of the disturbed area, and as soon as he did, it started to quiet down, and in ten minutes it was calm again.

“Starley was pretty badly shaken and besides he had lost both of his divers, so he came in and I saw him at the dock. When I heard his yarn, I took him into my confidence and told him what I had seen and that I proposed coming to you and asking your advice. I was afraid until I heard his story that it was merely a vision that I had had, but it certainly was no vision that plucked those two divers off their lines.”

“Has Captain Starley told that story to anyone else yet?”

“No, Doctor, he hasn’t. He promised not to talk until after I had seen you. I’ll vouch for him; he’ll keep his word through anything; and he is keeping his whole crew on board until he hears from me.”

Dr. Bird sprang to his feet.

“Mr. Mitchell,” he said energetically, “you have shown excellent judgment. Wire Captain Starley that you have seen me and that he is to hold his crew on board and to talk to no one until I get there. Carnes, telephone the Chief of Naval Operations and ask him to receive me in conference at once. Have him get the Secretary of the Navy in, too, if he is available. When you have finished that, telephone Bolton that you will be away from Washington indefinitely.”

“I’ll telephone Admiral Buck for you, Doctor, but I don’t dare telephone any such message to Bolton;

he'd take my head off. He has been running the whole service ragged lately, and this is my first afternoon off duty in a fortnight."

"What's the trouble, a flood of new counterfeits?"

"No, the counterfeit division is getting along all right. In point of fact, they have lent us a dozen men. The trouble is a sudden big increase in Communist activity throughout the country, with the Young Labor party behind it. Bolton has been pretty jumpy since that Stokowski affair last August and he is afraid of another attempt of some sort on the President."

"The Young Labor party? I thought that gang was bankrupt and out of business, since the Coast Guard broke up their alien smuggling scheme."

"They were down and out for a while, but they are in funds again—and how! They must have three or four millions at least."

"Where did they get it?"

“That’s what we have been trying to find out. The leaders have presented bars of gold to a dozen banks throughout the country and demanded specie. The banks shipped the gold to the mint and it was good gold, nine hundred and twenty-five fine. What we are trying to find out is how that gold got into the United States.”

“A shipment of that size should be easy to trace.”

“It would seem so, but it hasn’t been. We have accounted for every pound of every shipment that has come in through a port of entry, and we have checked almost that close on the output of every mine in the United States. If the gold came from Russia, it would have had to cross Europe, and we can’t get any trace of it from abroad. It looks as though they were *making* it.”

Dr. Bird rubbed his head thoughtfully.

“Possible, but hardly probable,” he said. “How much did you say they had?”

“Over three millions in thirty-pound bars. Each bar shows signs of having a mint mark chiselled off, but that don’t help much for they have done too good a job. It has us pretty well bluffed.”

Again Dr. Bird rubbed his head.

“Telephone Admiral Buck, and then phone Bolton and tell him exactly what I told you to: that you will be away indefinitely. When he gets through exploding, tell him that you are going with me and that possibly, just barely possibly, we might be on the trail of that gold shipment.”

“On the trail of the gold!” gasped Carnes. “Surely, Doctor, you don’t think—”

“Once in a while, old dear,” replied the Doctor with a chuckle, “which is more than anyone in the Secret Service does. You might tell Bolton that I said that, but hang up quickly if you do. I don’t want the wires of my telephone melted off. No, Carnesy, I have no miraculous inspiration as to where that gold is coming from; I just have a plain old-fashioned hunch,

and that hunch is that we are going to have lots of fun and more than our share of danger before we see Washington again. After you get through bearding Bolton in his den, you might call the Chief of the Air Corps and ask him to have a bomber held at Langley Field subject to my orders. If he squawks any, I'll talk to him."

He turned to a telephone which stood on his desk and lifted the receiver.

"Get Mr. Lambertson on the wire," he said. "He is the chief technician of the Pyrex Glass Works at Corning, New Jersey."

The *U.S.S. Minneconsin* steamed out of New York harbor and headed down toward the lower bay. On her forward deck rested a huge globe. The bottom quarter of the sphere was made of some dark opaque substance but the upper portion was transparent as crystal. Through the walls could be seen a quantity of apparatus resting on the opaque bottom portion. Two mechanics from the Bureau of Standards were making final adjustments of one of the pieces of

apparatus, which resembled a tank fitted with a piston geared to an electric motor. From the tank, tubes ran to four hollow pipes, an inch and a half in diameter, which ran through the skin and extended thirty inches from the outer skin of the twenty-foot sphere. Dr. Bird stood near talking with the executive officer of the ship and from time to time giving a brief word of direction to the mechanics.

“It’s safer than you might think, Commander,” he said. “In the first place, that globe is not made of ordinary glass; it is made of vitrilene, a new semi-malleable glass which was developed at the Bureau and which is being made on an experimental scale for us by the Pyrex people. It is much stronger than ordinary glass, and is not sensitive to shock. It is also perfectly transparent to ultra-violet light, being superior even to rock crystal or fused quartz in that respect. The walls, as you have noticed, are four inches thick, and I have calculated that the ball will stand a uniform external pressure of thirty-five hundred atmospheres, the pressure which would be encountered at a depth of about twenty miles. I



believe that it will stand a squeeze of six thousand tons without buckling, and it is impossible to fracture it by shock. It could be dropped from the top of the Woolworth Building, and it would just bounce.”

“It seems incredible that it could stand such a pressure as you have named.”

“My figures are conservative ones. Lambertson calculated them even higher, but we allowed for the fact that this is the first large mass of the material to be cast, and lowered them.”

“But suppose your lifting cable should break?” objected the naval officer. “The outfit weighs a good many tons.”

“You notice that the lower quarter is made of lead. The specific gravity of the entire globe when sealed up tight with two men in it is only a little more than unity. In the water its weight is so little that a three-inch manilla hawser would raise it, let alone a steel cable. I have another safety device. Granted that the

cable should snap, I can detach the lead from it and it would shoot to the surface like a rocket.”

“How long can you remain under water in it?”

“A week, if necessary. I have an oxygen tank and a carbon dioxide removing apparatus which will keep the air in good condition. The globe is electrically lighted, and can be heated if necessary. Should my telephone line become fouled and broken, I have a radio set which will enable me to communicate with you. I can’t see that it is especially dangerous; not nearly as much so as a submarine.”

“What is your object in going down, if I may ask?”

“To take pictures and to explore the wreck if we can. The globe is equipped with huge floodlights and excellent cameras. The salvage people are having a little trouble and we are trying to help them out.”

“You mentioned exploring. Can you leave the globe while it is under water?”

“Yes. There is a locking device for doing so. A man in a diving suit can enter the lock and fill it with water. Once the external pressure is released he can open the outer door and step out. Coming back, he seals the outer door and the man inside blows out the lock and compressed air and then the inner door can be opened. It is the same principle as a torpedo tube.”

A jangle of bells interrupted them and the *Minneconsin* slowed down. Commander Lawrence stepped to the rail and gave a sharp order to the navigating officer on the bridge. The bells jangled again and the ship’s engines stopped.

“We are almost over the buoy, Doctor,” he said.

Dr. Bird nodded and spoke to the two mechanics. With a few final touches to the apparatus they emerged from the globe and Dr. Bird entered.

“Come on, Carnes,” he called. “No backing out at the last minute.”

Carnes stepped forward with a sickly smile and joined the Doctor in the huge sphere.

“All right, boys; close her up.”

The mechanics swung the outer door into place with a crane. Both the edge of the door and the surface against which it fitted had been ground flat and were in addition faced with soft rubber. Bolts were fastened in the door which passed through holes in the main sphere, and Dr. Bird spun nuts onto them and tightened them with a heavy wrench. He and Carnes lifted the smaller inner door into place and bolted it tight. Dr. Bird stepped to the telephone.

“Lower away,” he directed.

From a boom attached to the *Minneconsin's* forward fighting top, a huge steel cable swung down, and the latch at the end of the cable was closed over a vitrilene ring which was fastened to the top of the sphere. The cable tightened and the globe with the two men in it was lifted over the side of the battleship and lowered gently into the water. Carnes

involuntarily ducked and threw up his hand as the waters closed over them. Dr. Bird laughed.

“Look up, Carnes,” he said.

Carnes gasped as he looked up and saw the surface of the water above him. Dr. Bird laughed again and turned to the telephone.

“Lower away,” he said. “Everything is tight.”

The globe descended into the depths of the sea. Darker and darker it grew until only a faint twilight glow filled the sphere. A dark bulk loomed before them. Dr. Bird snapped on one of his huge floodlights and pointed.

“The *Arethusa*,” he said.

The ill-fated vessel lay on her side with a huge jagged hole torn in her fabric amidships.

“That’s where her boilers burst,” explained the Doctor. “Luckily we have a hard bottom to deal with.

Let's see if we can locate any of Mitchell's sea serpents."

He turned on other flood lights and swept the bottom of the sea with them. The huge beams bored out into the water for a quarter of a mile, but nothing unusual was to be seen. Dr. Bird turned his attention again to the wreck.

"Things look normal from this side," he said after a prolonged scrutiny. "I'll have the *Minneconsin* steam around it while we look it over."

In response to his telephone orders the ship above them swung around the wreck in a circle, and Carnes and the Doctor viewed each side in turn. But nothing of a suspicious nature made its appearance. The sphere stopped opposite the hole in the side and Dr. Bird turned to Carnes.

"I'm going to put on a diving suit and explore that wreck," he said. "If there ever was any danger, it isn't apparent now; and I can't find out anything until I get inside."

“Don’t do it, Doctor!” cried Carnes. “Remember what happened to the other divers!”

“We don’t know what happened to them, Carnes. No matter what it was, there is no danger apparent right now, and I’ve got to get into that ship before I can get any real information. We could have lowered an under-sea camera and learned as much as we have so far.”

“Let me go instead of you, Doctor.”

“I’m sorry to refuse you, old dear, but frankly, I wouldn’t trust your judgment as to what you had seen if you went alone; and we can’t both go.”

“Why not?”

“If we both went, who would work the air to let us back in? No, this is a one-man job and I’m the one to do it. While I am gone, keep a sharp lookout, and if you see anything unusual call me at once.”

“How can I call you?”

“On this small radio phone. A pair of receivers tuned to the right wave-length are in my diving helmet, and I will be able to hear you although I can’t reply. I won’t be gone long: I have only a small air tank, large enough to keep me going for thirty minutes. Now help me into my suit and keep a sharp watch. A timely warning may save my life if anything happens.”

With Carnes’ assistance, Dr. Bird donned a deep-sea diving outfit and screwed down the helmet. He crawled through the inner door into the lock and lifted the inner door into place. Carnes fastened the door with nuts and the Doctor opened a pair of valves in the outer door and filled the lock with water. He removed the outer door; and, taking in one hand a steel-shod twelve-foot pike with a hook on the end, and in the other a waterproof flashlight, he sallied forth. As he left the shell he paused for a moment, and then returned and picked up the heavy wrench with which he had removed the nuts holding the outer door into place. He fastened the tool to the belt of his



suit. Then, with a wave of his hand toward the detective, he approached the hulk.

The hole in the side was too high for him to reach, but he hooked the end of his pike in one of the joints of the *Arethusa's* plates and climbed slowly and painfully up the side of the vessel. As he disappeared into the hull, Carnes realized with a sudden start that he had been watching his friend and neglecting the duty imposed on him of keeping a sharp watch. He turned quickly to the floodlights and searched the sea bottom.

Nothing appeared, and the minutes moved as slowly as hours should. Carnes felt that he had been submerged alone for weeks, and his nerves grew so tense that he felt that he would scream in another instant. A sudden thought sobered him like a dash of cold water. If he screamed, Dr. Bird would take it for an alarm signal and possibly be afraid to emerge from the vessel. His watch showed him that the Doctor had been gone for twenty-five minutes and he moved slowly to the radio transmitter.

“Dr. Bird,” he said slowly and distinctly, “you have been gone nearly thirty minutes. Nothing alarming has appeared but I will feel better when I see you coming back.”

He glued his eyes on the opening in the ship’s side and waited. Five minutes passed, and then ten, with no signs of the Doctor. Carnes moved again to the receiver.

“It has been over half an hour. Doctor,” he cried in a pleading voice. “If you are all right, for God’s sake show yourself. I am frantic with worry.”

Another five minutes passed, and the sweat dripped in a steady stream from the detective’s chin. Suddenly he gave a sob of relief and sank back against the side of the globe. A bulky figure showed at the edge of the hole, and Dr. Bird climbed slowly and heavily out of the hold and dropped to the sea bottom. He lay prone for a moment before he rose and made his way with evident effort toward the sphere. He entered the compartment and with a heroic effort lifted the outer door into place, and feebly and with fumbling fingers

placed nuts on the bolts. His hands wandered uncertainly toward the valves and closed the upper one. He waved his hand toward Carnes and sank in a heap on the floor of the lock.

With trembling hands Carnes connected the air and opened the valve. Air flowed into the lock and the water was gradually forced out. When the lock was empty, he waited for Dr. Bird to close the outer valve but the Doctor did not move. Carnes tore at the bolts which held the inner door and threw his weight against it. It held against his assault, and he thought frantically. An inspiration came to him, and he disconnected the air valve. With a whistling rush, the air from the lock rushed into the sphere and he forced open the inner door. A stream of sea water drove against his feet through the open valve, and he reached for the valve to close it. The force of the water held it open for a moment, but he threw every ounce of his strength into the effort. The valve slowly closed.

It was beyond his strength to haul the heavy Doctor with his pressure diving suit through the restricted

confines of the inner door, so Carnes wormed his way into the lock and with trembling fingers unscrewed the helmet of the Doctor's diving suit. The helmet clanged to the floor and Carnes scooped up his hands full of water and dashed it into the Doctor's face. There was no response and he was at his wit's end. He sprang for the radio to order the sphere hauled up when his glance fell on the oxygen tank. It took him only a moment to connect a rubber hose to the tank, and in a few seconds a blast of the life-giving gas was blowing into the scientist's face. Dr. Bird gave a convulsive gasp or two and opened his eyes.

"Shut off the juice, Carnes," he said faintly. "Too much of that's bad."

Carnes shut off the oxygen and Dr. Bird struggled to a sitting position and inhaled deep breaths.

"That was a narrow squeak, old dear," he said faintly. "Give me a hand and I'll climb in."

With the detective's aid he climbed into the sphere and Carnes fastened the inner door. Slowly the Doctor

rid himself of the diving suit and lay prone on the floor, his breath still coming in gasps.

“Thanks for your warning about the time, Carnes,” he said. “I knew that my air supply was running short but I was caught down there and couldn’t readily free myself. I thought for a while that my time had come, but it wasn’t so written. By the looks of things, I freed myself just in time.”

“Did you find out anything?” asked the detective eagerly.

“I did,” replied Dr. Bird grimly. “For one thing, the gold is no longer in the hold of the *Arethusa*.”

“It’s gone?”

“Clean as a whistle, every bar of it. A hole has been cut in the vault around the combination, and the bars slid back and the door opened. The gold has been stolen.”

“Might it not have been stolen before the vessel sank?”

“The idea occurred to me of course, and I examined things pretty carefully. I know that the theft occurred after the vessel sank.”

“How could you tell?”

“For one thing, the hole was cut with an under-water cutting torch. For the second, look here.”

The Doctor rolled up his trousers and showed the detective his leg. Carnes cried out as he saw huge purple welts on it.

“What caused that?” he cried.

“As I entered the vault, I stepped full into a steel bear trap which was set there for the purpose of catching and holding anyone who entered. Someone has visited the *Arethusa*, since she sank, and looted her, and also arranged so that any diver who got as far as the vault would never return to the surface to tell of it. Luckily

for myself, I carried a heavy wrench and was able to free myself. Most divers don't carry such a thing."

"But who could have done it?"

"That's what we have got to find out, and we aren't going to do it down here. Give the word to have us hauled up; and, Carnes, don't mention anything about the looting of the vessel. Allow it to be understood that I couldn't get into the hold. We'll head back for New York at once. I want to have a few small changes made in this sphere before we use it again. While I am doing that, I want you to get hold of the Coast Guard or the Immigration Service or whoever it is that has the complete records in that case of alien smuggling, by the Young Labor party. When you get the information, report to me and we'll go over it. You might also drop a hint to Captain Starley that will stop all further attempts at salvage operations for a few days. Tell him that I'll arrange to have a Coast Guard cutter guard the locality of the wreck."

"Won't that be rather risky for the cutter?"

“I think not. The gold is gone and there is no reason to apprehend any further danger in that locality, at least for the present.”

At nine o'clock next morning Carnes and Dr. Bird sat in the office of Lieutenant Commander Minden of the United States Coast Guard, listening intently to the history of the alien smuggling case. Commander Minden was saying:

“Their boats would load up and clear ostensibly for Rio de Janeiro or some other South American port, but once they were in the Atlantic, they would alter their course and head from the Massachusetts coast. Of course, we had no right to interfere with them on the high seas, and they never came closer than fifty miles of our coast line. When they got that close, they would cruise slowly back and forth for a few days and then steam away south to the port they had cleared for. When they got there, of course there were no passengers on board.

“We patrolled the coast carefully while they were around but we never got any indication of any landing



of aliens and yet we knew they were being landed in some way. We drew lines so close that a cork couldn't get by without being seen and we even had the air patrolled, but with no results. Eventually the air patrol was the thing that gave them away.

“They had been operating so successfully that they evidently got careless and started a load off late in the night so they didn't reach the coast by dawn. A Navy plane was flying along the coast-line about twelve miles off when they spotted a submarine running parallel with the coast, headed north. It didn't look like an American craft and they went on and radioed Washington and found that we had no under-sea craft in that neighborhood. They returned to their patrol and followed the sub for a matter of thirty or forty miles up the coast, and then it turned in right toward the shore. The shore line there is rocky, and, at the point where the sub was heading, it falls sheer about two hundred fathoms. The sub ran right at the cliff and disappeared from view.”

Lieutenant Commander Minden paused impressively. Carnes and Dr. Bird set forward in their chairs, for it was evident that the crux of the story was at hand.

“When the plane reported what they had seen, we knew how those aliens were being landed. The point where the sub went in gave us a good idea of the location of their base and we threw a cordon of men around and searched. A Navy sub was sent to the scene and they reported that there was a tunnel opening into the rock, about a hundred fathoms under water, running for they had no idea how far under the land. They stayed to guard the hole while we combed the land. It took us a week to locate the place, but we traced some truck loads of food and finally found it. This tunnel ran under the land for a mile and then ended in a large cave underground. The Young Labor party had established a regular receiving depot there, and took the aliens from the sub and kept them for a day or two until they had a chance to load them into trucks and run them into Boston or some other town in the night.

“Once we had the place spotted, we sent a gang in and captured the whole works without any trouble. The underground cavern had no natural opening to the surface, but one had been made by blasting. We captured the whole lot and then sealed the end of the hole with rock and concrete. That was the end of the affair.”

“Thank you, Commander; you have given us a very graphic description of it. I suppose you could find the entrance which was sealed up?”

“Easily. I led the raiding party. I forgot to mention one blunder we made. Evidently some word of our plans leaked out, for the sub which was guarding the outer end of the tunnel was called away by a radio message supposed to be from the Navy Department. It had gone only a short distance, however, when the commander smelled a rat and made his way back. He was too late. He was just in time to see the sub emerge from the hole and head into the open sea. He gave chase, but the other sub was faster than the Navy boat and it got clear away. The leader of the gang must have been on it, for we didn't get him.”

“Who was the leader?”

“From some records we captured, his name was Ivan Saranoff. I never saw him.”

“Saranoff?” said Dr. Bird thoughtfully. “The name seems familiar. Where have I—Thunder! I know now. He was at one time a member of the faculty of St. Petersburg. He was one of the leading biologists of his time. Carnes, we’ve found our man.”

“If you are thinking of Saranoff, I am afraid you are mistaken, Doctor,” said Commander Minden. “Neither he nor his submarine have ever been heard of since and it has been generally conceded that they were lost at sea. We had some pretty rough weather just after that affair.”

“Rough weather doesn’t mean much to a sub, Commander. I expect that he’s our man. At any rate, the place we want to go is the end of that tunnel.”

“I’m at your service, Doctor.”

“Carnes, get the location of that tunnel entrance from Commander Minden and order the *Minneconsin* to proceed north along the coast to that vicinity and stand by for radio orders. I am going to telephone Mitchell Field and get a plane. We have no time to lose.”

The plane from Mitchell Field roared down to a landing, and Carnes, Dr. Bird and Commander Minden dismounted from the rear cockpit and looked around. They had landed in a smooth field at the base of a rise almost rugged enough to be called a mountain. A group of three men were standing near them as they got out of the plane. One of the men approached.

“Dr. Bird?” asked the newcomer. “I am Tom Harron, United States Marshal. These two men are deputies. I understand that I am to report to you for orders.”

“I’m glad to know you, Mr. Harron. This is Operative Carnes of the Secret Service and Commander Minden of the Coast Guard. We are going to explore an underground cavern that is located in this vicinity.”

“Do you mean the one where they used to smuggle aliens? That is closed up. I was in charge of that work and we closed it tight as a drum two years ago.”

“Can you find the entrance?”

“Sure. It isn’t over a mile from here.”

“Lead the way, then. We want to take a look at it.”

The marshal led the way toward the eminence and took a path which led up a gully in its side. He paused for a moment to take his bearings and then turned sharply to his left and climbed part way up the side of the ravine.

“Here it is,” he announced. An expression of astonishment crossed his face and he examined the ground closely. “By Golly, Doc,” he went on as he straightened up, “this place has been opened since I left it!”

Dr. Bird hurried forward and joined him. The heavy stone and concrete with which the entrance to the

cavern had been sealed were undisturbed, but in the side of the hill was set a steel door beside the concrete. There was no sign of a keyhole or other means of entering it.

“Was this steel door part of your work?” asked Carnes.

“No, sir, it wasn’t. We sealed it solid. That door has been put there since.”

Dr. Bird closely examined the structure. He tapped it and went around the edges and then straightened up and took a small pocket compass from his pocket and opened the case. The needle swung crazily for a moment and then pointed straight toward the door.

“A magnetic lock,” he exclaimed. “If we could find the power line it would be easy to force, but finding that line might take us a week. At any rate, we have found out what we were after. This is their base from which they are operating. Mr. Harron, I want you to station a guard armed with rifles at this door day and night until I personally relieve you. Remember, until I

relieve you, in person. Verbal or written orders don't go. Capture or kill anyone who tries to enter or leave the cavern through this entrance. Just now we'll find that cavern more vulnerable from the sea end, and that is where I mean to attack. We'll force that door and explore from this end later. Commander Minden, you may stay here with Mr. Harron, if you like, or you may come with Carnes and me. We are going on board the *Minneconsin*."

The Mitchell Field plane roared to a take-off and bore south along the coast. Half an hour of flying brought them in view of the battleship steaming at full speed up the coast. Dr. Bird radioed instructions to the ship, and an hour later a launch picked them up from the beach and took them out. As soon as they were on board they resumed their progress, and in two hours the peak that Dr. Bird had marked as a landmark was opposite.

"Steam in as close to the shore as you can safely," he said, "and then lower us. Once we are down, you will be guided by our telephoned instructions. Come on, Carnes, let's go."



The detective followed him into the sphere as the *Minneconsin* edged up toward the shore. The huge ball was lifted from the deck and lowered gently into two hundred fathoms of water. It was pitch dark at that depth, and Dr. Bird switched on one floodlight and studied the cliff which rose a hundred yards from them.

“We have missed the place, Carnes,” he said. “We’ll have them pull us up a few hundred feet and then steam along the coast.”

He turned to the telephone and the sphere rose while the battleship steamed slowly ahead, the vitrilene ball following in her wake. For a quarter of a mile they continued on their way, and then Dr. Bird halted the ship.

“What depth are we?” he asked. “Eighty fathoms? All right, lower us, please.”

The ball sank until it rested on the sea bottom, and Dr. Bird turned on two additional floodlights and studied the surroundings. The bed of the ocean was

literally covered with lobster and crab shell, with the bones of fish scattered here and there among them. A few bones of land animals were mixed with the debris and Carnes gave a gasp as Dr. Bird pointed out to him a diving helmet.

“We are on the right track,” said the scientist grimly. He stepped to the telephone and ordered the sphere raised to one hundred fathoms. The ship moved forward along the coast until Dr. Bird again stepped to the telephone and halted it. Before them yawned the entrance to the underground tunnel. It was about two hundred feet high and three hundred across, and their most powerful beams would not penetrate to the end of it. A pile of debris could be seen on the floor of the tunnel and Carnes fancied that he could see another diving helmet among the litter. Dr. Bird pointed toward the side of the cavern.

“See those floodlights fastened to the cliff so that their beams will sweep across the mouth of the tunnel when they are lighted?” he said. “Apparently the cave is used as a prison and the light beams are the bars.

The creature is not at home just now or the bars would be up. My God! Look at that, Carnes!”

Carnes stared and echoed the Doctor’s cry of surprise. Clinging to a shelf of rock which extended out from the wall of the cavern and half hidden among the seaweed was a huge marine creature. It looked like a huge black slug with rudimentary eyes and mouth. The thing was fifty feet in length and fully fifteen feet in diameter. It hung there, moving sluggishly as though breathing, and rudimentary tentacles projecting from one end moved in the water.

“What is it, Doctor?” asked Carnes in a voice of awe.

“It is a typical trochosphere of the giant octopus, the devil fish of Indian Ocean legend, multiplied a thousand times,” he replied. “When the octopus lays its eggs, they hatch out into the larval form. The free swimming larva is known as a trochosphere, and I am positive that that is what we see; but look at the size of the thing! Man alive, if that ever developed, I can’t conceive of its dimensions!”

“I have seen pictures of a huge octopus pulling down a ship,” said Carnes, “but I always fancied they were imaginary.”

“They are. This monstrosity before us is no product of nature. A dozen of them would depopulate the seas in a year. It is a hideous parody of nature conceived in the brain of a madman and produced by some glandular disturbance. Saranoff spent years in glandular experimentation, and no doubt he has managed to stimulate the thyroid of a normal octopus and produce a giant. I fancy that the immediate parent of the thing before us was of normal size, and so, probably, are its brothers and sisters. The phenomenon of giantism of this nature occurs in alternate generations and then only in rare instances. Its grandparent may not be far away, however. I wish it was safe to use a submarine to explore that cavern.”

“Why isn’t it?”

“Any creature powerful enough to pull the *Arethusa* under water would crush a frail submarine without

effort. Anyway, a Navy sub isn't built for under-water exploration like this ball is. The window space is quite limited and they aren't equipped with powerful floodlights. I would like to be able to reach that thing and destroy it, but it can wait until later. The best thing we can do is to put out our lights and wait."

His hand sought the light switch, and the globe became dark. Only a tiny glimmer of light came down to them from the surface, a hundred fathoms above. In the darkness they stared into the depths of the sea.

For an hour they waited and then Dr. Bird grasped Carnes by the shoulder and pointed. Far in the distance could be seen a tiny point of light. It wavered and winked and at times disappeared, but it was gradually approaching them. Dr. Bird stepped to the telephone and the *Minneconsin* moved a hundred yards further from the shore. The light disappeared again as though hidden by some opaque body. Their eyes had become accustomed to the dim light and they could dimly see a long snake-like body approach the globe and then suddenly withdraw.

The light appeared again only a few hundred yards away. The water swirled and the sphere swayed drunkenly as some gigantic body moved past it with express train speed and entered the mouth of the cavern. The light turned toward them and they could see the dim outlines of a small submarine on which it was mounted. Another rush of water came as the object which had entered the cave started to leave it, and the light swung around. It bore on a huge black body, and was reflected with a red glow from huge eyes, and the creature backed again into the cave. Back and forth across the mouth of the cavern the light played, and the watchers caught a glimpse of a huge parrot beak which could have engulfed a freight car. From the cavern projected twisting tentacles of gargantuan dimensions, and red eyes, thirty feet in diameter, glared balefully at them. For several minutes the light of the submarine played across the mouth of the cave, and then the floodlights on the cliff sprang into full glow and bathed the ball and the mouth of the tunnel in a flood of light.

Before their horrified gaze was an octopus of a size to make them disbelieve their eyes. The submarine had moved up to within a few feet of them, and the light from it played full on the ball. The submarine maneuvered in the vicinity, keeping the ball full in the beam of its light, and then drew back. As it did so, the floodlights on the cliff died out and the beam of the submarine's light was directed away from them. Dr. Bird jumped to the telephone.

"Head straight out to sea and full speed ahead!" he shouted. "Don't try to pull us in; tow us!"

The ball swayed as the *Minneconsin's* mighty engines responded to his orders and the cliff wall disappeared.

"As long as they know we're here, we might as well announce our presence in good style," said the doctor grimly as he closed a switch and threw all of the sphere's huge lights into action. He had turned on the lights just in time, for even as he did so a mighty tentacle shot out of the darkness and wrapped itself

around the ball. For a moment it clung there and then was withdrawn.

“The thing can’t stand light,” remarked the doctor as he threw off the switch. “That sub was herding it like a cow by the use of a light beam. As long as we are lighted up we are safe from attack.”

“Then for God’s sake turn on the lights!” cried Carnes.

“I want it to attack us,” replied the doctor calmly. “We have no offensive weapons and only by meeting an attack can we harm the thing.”

As he spoke there came a soft whisper of sound from the vitrilene walls and they were thrown from their feet by a sudden jerk. Dr. Bird stumbled to the switch and closed it, and the ball was flooded with light. Two arms were now on them but they were slowly withdrawn as the lights glared forth. The huge outlines of the beast could be seen as it followed them toward the surface. Its great eyes glared at them



hungrily. The submarine was visible only as a speck of light in the distance.

The *Minneconsin's* speed was picking up under the urge of her huge steam turbines, and the ball was nearing the surface. The sea was light enough now that they could see for quite a distance. The telephone bell jangled and Dr. Bird picked the receiver from its hook.

"Hello," he said. "What's that? You can? By all means, fire. Yes, indeed, we're well out of danger; we must be thirty or forty feet down. Watch the fun now," he went on to Carnes as he replaced the receiver. "The beast is showing above the surface and they're going to shell it."

They watched the surface and suddenly there came a flash of light followed by a dull boom of sound. The huge octopus suddenly sank below them, thrashing its arms about wildly.

"A hit!" shouted Dr. Bird into the telephone. "Get it again if it shows up. I want it to get good and mad."

He turned off the lights in the ball and the octopus attacked again. The shell had taught it caution and it kept well down, but three huge arms came up from the depths of the sea and wrapped themselves about the ball. The forward motion stopped for a moment, and then came a jerk that threw them down. The ball started to sink.

“Our cable has parted!” cried the doctor. “Turn on the lights!”

Carnes closed the switch. The ball was so covered with the huge tentacles that they could see nothing, but the light had its usual effect and they were released. The ball sank toward the bottom and they could see the huge cephalopod lying below watching them. Blood was flowing from a wound near one of its eyes where the *Minneconsin's* shell had found its mark.

Toward the huge monster they sank until they lay on the bottom of the ocean and a few yards from it. In an instant the sea became opaque and they could see nothing.

“He has shot his ink!” cried the doctor. “Here comes the real attack. Strap yourself to the wall where you can reach one of the motor switches.”

Through the darkness huge arms came out and wrapped themselves around the ball. The heavy vitrilene groaned under the enormous pressure which was applied, but it held. The ink was clearing slightly and they could see that the sphere was covered by the arms. The mass moved and the huge maw opened before them. The pipes projecting from the sides of the ball were buried in the creature’s flesh.

“Good Lord, he’s going to swallow us!” gasped the doctor. “Quick, Carnes, the motor switch.”

He closed one of them as he spoke, and the powerful little electric motors began to hum, forcing forward the piston attached to the tank connected to the hollow rods. Steadily the little motors hummed, and the tank emptied through the rods into the body of the giant cephalopod.

“I hope the stuff works fast,” groaned the doctor as they approached closer to the giant maw. “I never tried giving an octopus a hypodermic injection of prussic acid before, but it ought to do the business. There’s enough acid there to kill half New York City.”

Carnes blanched as the ball approached the mouth. One by one the arms unwound until only one was holding them and the jaws opened wider. They were almost in them when the motion stopped. They could feel a shudder run through the arm which held them. For a moment the arm alternately expanded and contracted, almost releasing them only to clutch them again. Another arm came from the depths and whipped about the ball, and again the vitrilene groaned at the pressure which was applied. The arms were suddenly withdrawn and the ball started to sink.

“Drop the lead, Carnes!” cried the doctor. With the aid of the detective he operated the electric catches which held the huge mass of lead to the bottom, and the sphere shot up through the water like a rocket. It leaped clear of the water and fell back with a splash. A half mile away the *Minneconsin* was swinging in a

wide circle to head back toward them. They turned their gaze toward the shore.

As they looked a giant arm shot a hundred yards up into the air, twisting and writhing frantically. It disappeared, and another, and then half a dozen flashed into the air. The arms dipped below the surface. A huge black body reared its bulk free from the water for a moment, and the sea boiled as though in a violent storm. The body sank and again the arms were thrown up, twisting and turning like a half dozen huge snakes. The whole creature sank below the waves and the ball tossed back and forth, often buried under tons of water and once tossed thirty feet into the air by the huge waves.

A momentary lull came in the waves. Carnes gave a cry of astonishment and pointed toward the shore. With an effort, Dr. Bird twisted himself in his lashing and looked in that direction. The huge body had again come to the surface, and three of the arms were towering into the air. Grasped in them was a long, black, cigar-shaped object. As they watched the object was torn into two parts and the fragments

crushed by the enormous power of the octopus. Again the arms writhed in torment, and then they stiffened out. For a moment they towered in the air and then slowly sank below the surface of the sea.

“The cyanide has worked,” cried the doctor, “and in its last agonies the creature has turned on its creator and destroyed him. It is a shame, for Saranoff was a brilliant although perverted genius, and besides, I would have liked to have learned his method.

However, I may find something when we open the land end and raid the cave; and really, he was too brilliant a man to hang for murder. Once we open the cave and I get any data that is there, my connection with the case will end. Trailing down the gold and recovering it is a routine matter for Bolton, and one in which he won’t need my help.”

“What about that creature we saw in the cave, Doctor? Won’t it hatch into another terror of the sea like the thing that destroyed the ship?”

“The trochosphere? No, I’m not worried there. It won’t try to leave the cave for some days yet, and by

that time we'll have the land end opened and the floodlights turned on. They will keep it there and it will starve to death. We could send down a sub to feed it a torpedo, but there's no need. Nature will dispose of it. Meanwhile, I hope the *Minneconsin* rigs up a jury tackle pretty soon and takes us on board. I'm getting seasick."